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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

INFORMATION

March 17, 1971

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.....

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*

SUBJECT:

Chou En-Lai Visit to Hanoi

Chicom Premier Chou En-Lai's recent four day visit to Hanoi was primarily to boost North Vietnamese morale in a difficult period. Chinese promises and commitments, however, probably did not come up to Hanoi wishes.

-- While Chou did not specifically rule out the possibility of Chinese intervention in Indochina, he gave no indication that this was at all imminent.

-- Chou promised all-out support to Communist forces in Indochina, but his predictions of a Communist victory by the "Indochinese people" minimized the necessity of Chinese intervention. He characterized China's role in Indochina as that of a "reliable rear area."

-- He also suggested that North Vietnam could take care of itself if attacked.

-- North Vietnamese delegates in Paris have stated several times that a threat to North Vietnam was a threat to China. Chinese media, however, never reported these statements.

-- The North Vietnamese probably wanted Chou to help deter Allied attacks on North Vietnam by repeating the commitment to Hanoi which the North Vietnamese delegates had claimed in Paris, but Chou was not prepared to do so.

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2

-- On the first day of the visit, Chou would go no farther than to state that enlarging the war in the "Indochinese area" posed a "serious threat" to China.

-- The tone of the speeches indicated that the Chinese approached the visit with reserve. The initial public ebullience of North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong thus soon became subdued -- suggesting that the Chinese had dampened Hanoi's expectations in the initial talks.

-- The final communique stated that intensified Allied "aggression" in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia "directly menaces" both North Vietnam and China. This vague language probably represented a compromise with the Chinese who are reluctant to commit themselves more specifically.

-- The communique repeated Chou's earlier statement that China would not let the U. S. "do whatever it pleases" in Indochina and that the Chinese would not flinch from "even the greatest national sacrifice" to aid the Vietnamese and other Indochinese peoples. However, there were no specifics.

-- The communique also stated that the "grave situation" resulting from the expansion of the war had been discussed and "identical views" had been reached on how to deal with possible U. S. "military adventures." The communique gave no clue as to what these views are.

-- The communique did not mention increased military aid to North Vietnam -- probably because a supplementary aid agreement had been recently concluded in Peking; however, Chinese logistic support was no doubt discussed.